

ENVIRONMENTAL DATA & GOVERNANCE INITIATIVE

ETM SBU 003

Excerpt of an Interview

Conducted by

Christopher Sellers

(With Subsequent Corrections and Additions)

INTERVIEWEE: Joseph Piotrowski

INTERVIEWER: Christopher Sellers

DATE: December 20, 2016

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[...]

<T: 65 min>

INTERVIEWEE: Yes. I have a more recent example, which makes me think that I now have two points of data, if you want to jump to the more recent example.

INTERVIEWER: I think we can start to do that.

INTERVIEWEE: This more recent example jumps all the way to 2000 to 2006, when we end up with Republicans through the whole chain of command and in Congress. So I guess I did put down that I currently teach the basic course in climate change at Penn.

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

INTERVIEWEE: I start to get involved in climate change-related issues 2003-2004, and I won't go into the whole project and everything unless you want me to go into it later, but the bottom line is I find out when I take my boss who, at the time, was the Director of the Office of Water in headquarters with me to go talk to the... Actually, he wasn't the Director of Waters, the next level down was the Director of one of the Water Program Divisions in headquarters to talk to his counterpart about a joint project and being told that not only are we not allowed to talk about climate change, but that they hadn't actually updated the website between 2000 and 2006.

INTERVIEWER: They had done nothing on the website.

INTERVIEWEE: Correct.

INTERVIEWER: This is with regard to climate change.

INTERVIEWEE: Correct. You know, the hearings started in Congress in the late 80s. The project that got me there that resulted in me finding out that EPA's Air Office was not allowed to discuss climate change—

INTERVIEWER: Was that kind of a mandate?

INTERVIEWEE: I have no idea. The implication I had gotten, not just from that but from other things I'd heard in the Office of Water who I was working for at the time, was basically the Department of Interior Secretary is running the Environmental Policy for this Administration.¹

INTERVIEWER: That would suggest that this person, I forget the name, who was Department of Interior?

INTERVIEWEE: I don't remember.

<T: 70 min>

¹ Gale A. Norton was the U.S. Department of the Interior Secretary from 2001-2006 under President George W. Bush.

INTERVIEWER: But this person was also calling the shots directly or indirectly for EPA as well in terms of what the Air Office was doing.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, policy at that level, it's hard to tell who's calling policy whether it's being operated out of the White House. Sometimes a lot of the calls get made out of the White House it seems. Sometimes the administrators and the Secretaries of the Interior are given a lot of freedom. It's hard to understand and I only have hearsay as to how it might be. [...]